

reservation on

11-24-76

28 November 1975

HOW BEST TO PRODUCE ESTIMATES

1. There has been some debate over the relative merits of producing National Intelligence Estimates through the present National Intelligence Officer (NIO) system or the Board of National Estimates (BNE) system formerly used.

2. Some of this debate has been simplistic, since the functions of the NIOs and those carried out by the BNE overlap only in part. The NIOs are responsible for production of National Intelligence Estimates, but they do many other things as well.

3. I confess to a strong preference for the present system, for several reasons:

a. As DCI, I have been convinced that there must be a close, dynamic relationship between the substance of the intelligence effort and the management of it. This becomes all the more necessary in an era of resource austerity and increasingly complex intelligence requirements. Unless we mesh substance and management closely -- so that substance drives management and management effectively supports substance -- we will spend too much money for too few results or results

of the wrong kind. In a variety of ways, the NIOs have proven their usefulness in fostering this effort.

b. I feel a need for broad-gauged, substantive specialists to advise or represent me in directing the production effort and especially the collection effort. This requires a functional or regional expertise which generalists do not have, and which the NIOs have supplied. A prime example is their role in administering the annual Key Intelligence Questions program, which is central to organizing both collection and production efforts each year.

c. I also consider that the NIOs have proven their usefulness in energizing the Intelligence Community, in providing a lateral extension of the DCI's authority and a flexible, responsive two-way channel of communication between the DCI and the corps of substantive experts in the CIA directorates and the other agencies of the Community. I further believe the NIOs have improved communications and cooperation, not only within the Intelligence Community, but, certainly no less important, between the Community and our policy-making consumers. I believe a Board is more apt to generate competitive efforts or end runs.

d. Finally, I believe that the NIOs have proven effective in focusing intelligence estimates sharply on questions of direct and timely policy relevance and in defining variations in judgments within the Community. Our principal consumers are especially interested in smoking out differences of view between experts or agencies, and having these laid out with cogent explanations as to why. I believe that a Board ~~is~~ ^{was} more inclined to reject or compromise such differences.

4. The NIO system is a little over two years old, and still evolving. In the light of experience, I believe that we need to strengthen it in certain respects. We have encountered some difficulties in getting quality estimates promptly prepared especially when problems cut across geographical specialties, when agencies other than CIA have been asked to prepare drafts, or when NIOs levy work on production offices already heavily engaged in high priority work. The press of daily and weekly duties on the NIOs may not always give them the sustained freedom from pressure needed for the most thoughtful, long-term work.

5. But I believe the system can easily enough be adapted to provide these improvements. It might, for example, be sensible to provide a small group of expert drafters or

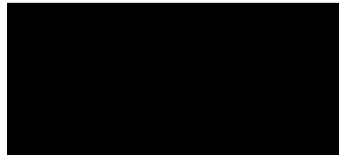
editors to assist the line analysts who are asked to prepare draft estimates. It might be well to add two or three NIOs with responsibilities cutting across geographic or functional lines who are free enough from other responsibilities to think primarily in long-range terms. And we might use consultants even more than we have so far.

6. I consider that incremental improvements to the present system, along these lines, would meet the real needs while preserving a system that has clearly proven itself of great use to me as DCI.

MEMORANDUM FOR:

~~EMP/PW~~

This is a product of General Wilson's task force.
Bill Parmenter expressed reservations about Para 5.
When the paper goes to the DCI there will be a notation
to the effect that some members think that paragraph
needs a lot more thought.



STATINTL

Date 2 December 1975

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